San Gabriel Presbytery
Supplement to the PC(U.S.A.) General Assembly Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry

Commission on Preparation for Ministry

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to the PC(USA) General Assembly Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry

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December 2025

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Commission on Preparation for Ministry

Description of Responsibilities:

The Commission on Preparation for Ministry is responsible to guide the process for full preparation of individuals who are to be ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The Commission does this by:

- Providing orientation for individuals and sessions considering church vocation.
- Prayerfully following the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives and ministries of Inquirers and Candidates under care of the Presbytery, helping them explore where God is calling them to serve.
- Building faithful relationships with sessions and seminaries that support and train Inquirers and Candidates.
- Providing direction and information to equip Inquirers and Candidates educationally and vocationally for service in the PC(USA).
- Challenging those in the process of preparation for ministry to a mature obedience to the Holy Spirit in their life and vocation.
- Assessing whether to recommend the suitability of Inquirers and Candidates for ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament to continue the process at each stage of preparation.

CPM shall also be responsible for selecting and recommending to the Presbytery for election the names of persons suitable and willing to read ordination examinations when the Presbytery is asked to provide readers.

The Presbytery of San Gabriel at its November 2015 meeting granted to the CPM the authority to take the following actions, when necessary, on behalf of the Presbytery:

- Elect ordination examination readers
- Enroll new Inquirers
- Certify a Candidate ready for final examination for ordination, pending a call
- Concur with a request for an Inquirer or Candidate to be removed from the Preparation for Ministry process

Commission Membership:
The Presbytery will elect CPM members, divided into 3 renewable three-year classes. Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders should be included as equally as possible in membership. A member who has served for six years cannot be re-elected until at least one year has passed.

Policies of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry:
PC(USA) Book of Order, current edition
PC(USA) General Assembly Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry, current edition
San Gabriel Presbytery Supplement to the PC(USA) General Assembly Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry, 2025:

Outline of Process for San Gabriel Presbytery CPM
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Outline of Process for Inquirers and Candidates

This outline will serve as a guide to Inquirers and Candidates as they move through the process leading to ordination as a Teaching Elder. It is only an outline, however. A full understanding of the process requires study of the relevant sections of the current edition of the Book of Order, the General Assembly Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry, and the San Gabriel Presbytery Supplement to that Advisory Handbook. These documents can be found on the websites of the General Assembly and San Gabriel Presbytery.

The forms indicated below can be found on the PC(USA) website: www.pcusa.org and the website of San Gabriel Presbytery. You must submit documents for each step at least two weeks prior to your scheduled appearance at a CPM meeting. If possible, please e-mail the documents to ericka@sangabpres.org.

To be enrolled as an Inquirer:

- Meet with your church's Session and receive its endorsement. You will need to be active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months and a member of that congregation before Session can endorse you.
- Submit form 1A-C (applicant) and Form 1D (Session).
- Submit a statement of motivation (one page). Introduce yourself and your interest in ministry.
- Submit official transcripts of all post-secondary education and unofficial transcripts of any course work still in progress.
- Undergo a psychological assessment by a psychologist designated by the CPM. The report will be sent directly to CPM. The cost will be divided: 1/3 by CPM; 1/3 by Session; 1/3 by applicant.
- When these steps have been taken, meet with CPM, accompanied by your Session liaison.

After CPM recommends acceptance as an Inquirer:

- A member of CPM will be appointed as your liaison to the Commission.
- Submit form 2A (applicant and CPM liaison) and 2B (applicant, CPM Moderator, and Session Moderator).
- Be introduced to the Presbytery at a regular meeting. No statement by the Inquirer is needed.
- Complete boundary training and repeat at least every 36 months in a manner approved by CPM.
- Confer regularly with your CPM liaison. Turn first to your liaison when you need information about the CPM process and as you plan for each following step in the process. Plan each step several months in advance with your liaison.
- Confer regularly also with your Session liaison.

Each year that you are under care of the Presbytery's CPM, you are expected to do the following:

- Attend at least two San Gabriel Presbytery meetings, in person or remotely.
- You and your liaison together will complete form 3. [Candidates Certified Ready to Receive a Call may write an update rather than completing form 3.]
- Have a consultation with the CPM at the end of each year, accompanied by the Session liaison.

To become a Candidate, you need to:

- Be an Inquirer for at least one year.
- Pass the Bible Content Exam.
- Be enrolled in (or have completed) an M.Div. Program in a Presbytery-approved seminary.
- Accomplish other tasks required by CPM. This may include an updated psychological evaluation. It shall also include explorations of your understanding of Reformed theology as it relates to Christian vocation and personal faith and your understanding of what it means to be a Presbyterian Teaching Elder.
- Submit form 5A and form 5B, including a letter of recommendation from your Session.
- Submit a Statement on the Sense of Call reflecting self-awareness at the end of the Inquiry phase (one page). This Statement should reflect the Inquirer's Sense of Call within the context of ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Present the Statement also to your Session.
- Provide certification of completion of boundary training approved by CPM within the last thirty-six months. [BO G-2.0603]
- Undergo a background check. Request the consent form from the Presbytery office.
- When all these steps have been taken, meet with CPM, accompanied by your Session liaison, and receive approval to advance to Candidate status.
- Read the Statement on the Sense of Call on the floor of Presbytery and be examined by the Presbytery. Presbytery must then take action to receive you as a Candidate.

To apply to be Certified Ready for Final Examination, Pending a Call:

- Receive (or be about to receive) an M.Div. Degree from a seminary approved by the Presbytery.
- Take for credit and pass a course in each of the following areas: 1) Reformed theology and the Book of Confessions; 2) Presbyterian polity; 3) Presbyterian history and programs; and 4) Reformed worship and the sacraments. If a course in any of those areas is not available to you, make use of alternative resources approved by CPM to acquire competence in that area.
- Take for credit and pass courses in Greek and Hebrew and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Greek and Hebrew.
- Pass all four national Senior Ordination Exams.
- Complete (or have nearly completed) at least one church internship, in a ministry setting different from your home church or previous experience. Normally the plan for this internship must be approved by CPM before beginning the internship. Submit evaluation of the internship to CPM.
- Complete (or have nearly completed) one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at a site accredited by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. Normally your plan for CPE must be approved in advance by CPM. Submit evaluation of the CPE to CPM.
- Be a Candidate for at least one year.
- Accomplish other tasks required by CPM. This may include an updated psychological evaluation. It shall include exploring your understanding of the ordination questions and your commitment to service as a Presbyterian Teaching Elder.
- Provide certification of completion of boundary training approved by CPM within the last thirty-six months. [BO G-2.0603]
- Ensure that all college and seminary transcripts are available to CPM. [BO G-2.0607]
- Submit a one-page theological Statement of Faith compatible with the confessional standards of PC(USA).

- Submit an exegesis of Scripture for a sermon, indicating the context in which it is intended to be preached, and a written manuscript of the sermon.
- Meet with CPM, accompanied by your Session liaison, to read your Statement of Faith, preach the sermon, and receive approval by CPM.

If more than three years pass between certification ready for final examination and receipt of a call, meet with CPM. Further updating may be needed.

Ordination is approved after:

- You receive a call to a validated ministry as determined by the calling presbytery (usually via COM).
- You are examined on the floor of the ordaining presbytery. Unless other arrangements are made, the "calling presbytery" is also the "ordaining presbytery."

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Internship and CPE Guidelines

This document outlines the required experiences we believe will prepare a candidate well for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

The Presbytery of San Gabriel has two field-education requirements:
A Church internship
One unit of Clinical Pastoral Education

Engage your CPM liaison early to discern together the internship and CPE settings that would be most helpful to you in your growth and development.

I. The Church Internship

Before undertaking to meet this requirement, you must receive **pre-approval** from the Commission on Preparation for Ministry. Your liaison will meet with you and a potential internship supervisor to explore possible arrangements and help to develop a Learning Agreement. Then request approval from CPM for your plan before entering into any formal arrangements to meet the requirements.

- Normally this internship will be within a PC(USA) congregation. Exceptions are rare.
- An internship must provide both ministry growth experience for the candidate through action and reflection and genuine assistance to the pastor and the congregation.
  An internship should provide a broad range of ministry experiences to the intern, rather than merely "filling a gap" for a congregation or pastor. In general, 50% of the intern's time should be spent in active leadership. Up to 30% will be devoted to preparation for that leadership, and 20% for theological reflection.
- The length of a standard internship is nine months, with a minimum of ten hours per week devoted to it. While this plan is preferable, some choose a ten-week internship, with a minimum of thirty-six hours per week.
- It is usually best to seek an internship in a congregation significantly different from the church which has been most formative for the candidate, in size and other demographic aspects.
- It is preferable to complete the internship in a congregation other than the one the candidate currently attends.
- An internship supervisor must be ready to invest in the growth of the intern as a mentor, companion in theological reflection, prayerful advocate, and model. This will require a weekly meeting with ample opportunities for reflection on ministry and for supervision in the form of coaching prior to and feedback following leadership events, such as sermons and pastoral visits.
- A small team of members of the congregation should be designated to assist the intern in understanding the congregation.
- While we recognize that many churches have limited funds, we highly recommend that internship sites provide a stipend for interns.
- Interns who have not received approved boundary training within two years must take this training prior to beginning their internship.

Required **Components of an Internship: Interns will**

1. **Design a broad ministry experience**
   - **S**et goals and design program together with supervising pastor
   - Determine evaluative process
   - Attend many different church committees throughout internship
2. **Assist in Worship**
   - Attend worship planning meeting
   - Observe development of worship music
   - Assist in Communion at least once
   - Memorize the Words of Institution
   - Help prepare elements for a Communion Service
3. **Preach at least three sermons**
   - Discuss sermon preparation with pastor
   - Evaluate the sermon afterward with pastor
4. **Make pastoral visits**
   - Visit a sick member at home
   - Visit a member in the hospital
   - Reflect with pastor on the experience
5. **Attend Session meetings throughout internship**
   - Participate in the preparation of a Session agenda
   - Share a devotional for the Session
   - Observe/assist in elder training
   - Meet with the church treasurer
   - Learn about the monthly financial report
   - Discuss the annual budget of the congregation with pastor and treasurer
6. **Attend a meeting of the Deacons**
   - Observe/assist in a deacon visit or project
   - Observe/assist in deacon training
7. **Meet weekly with supervising pastor, with at least one meeting devoted to:**
   - How the pastor plans his or her week
   - How the pastor plans a year (for example: preaching, personal growth, congregational goals) and other aspects of pastoral leadership
   - Reflection with pastor on the ethnic, socio-economic, and other aspects of the culture of the congregation and how the Gospel speaks to that culture
   - Ongoing reflection on the intern's sense of his or her calling, gifts, and skills

Recommended **components include:**

- Assist in a baptism
- Join the congregation in service to their community
- Teach an adult class
- Teach a children's class
- Observe/assist training of teachers
- Assist in a funeral service
  - Observe/assist in planning with family
  - Design a funeral service and discuss it with the pastor
- Assist in a wedding service

Observe or discuss premarital counseling sessions with pastor
Design a wedding service and discuss it with the pastor
Assist/observe rehearsal

- Observe the pastor's leadership in the community
  Opening prayer at City Hall meetings, community organizing to advocate for immigrants or those experiencing homelessness, for example

Learning agreement and evaluation
The CPM requires a Learning Agreement prior to approval of the internship. The Learning Agreement is a covenant between the supervisor, intern, and CPM. It sets forth the intern's ministry responsibilities and time commitments, the mutual goals of the intern and supervisor for both ministry and learning, and establishes the supervision contract. In addition, CPM requires a written summary and evaluation of the internship by both the candidate and the supervising pastor at the mid-point and at the conclusion of the internship.

II. Clinical Pastoral Education

One unit of level 1 CPE is required. This requirement can be met at any CPE program site accredited by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. CPM may be able to recommend local sites that have been helpful to other candidates. Either a full-time, shorter program or an extended, part-time program may be chosen.

Candidates should plan carefully to coordinate the time demands of CPE with other aspects of their preparation for ministry. The deadline for applications for a particular program may be well in advance of the beginning of the program, and the number of persons admitted may be restricted. So researching the options early in the ministry preparation process is important.

If financial assistance is needed, candidates may apply to CPM for a grant to cover the cost of tuition for CPE.

San Gabriel Presbytery
Role of the CPM Liaison

Liaisons are the key to the effective work of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry. Liaisons should see their task as both shepherding and discerning. They are the continuing connection between the CPM and the individual Inquirers and Candidates to which they are assigned. The primary tasks of liaisons are to explain the process of preparation for ministry, to act as contact persons, and to serve as advocates for their assigned Inquirers or Candidates. Inquirers/Candidates will turn first to their liaisons for information before contacting the presbytery office. Liaisons communicate the commission's concerns to Inquirers or Candidates, and when appropriate, to the home church pastor and elder liaison.

The Tasks of Liaisons

- Become familiar with the necessary steps in the process of preparation for ministry and the resources available (e.g. manual, web site).
- Explain the process and functioning of the commission to your Inquirers/Candidates. Include what is expected of them and what they can expect of the commission.
- Put a human face on the process. Liaisons are the primary persons who can communicate to the Inquirers and Candidates the care and concern of the presbytery.
- Help Inquirers/Candidates get in touch with their strengths and weaknesses. Be honest, but kind.
- Make regular contact with Inquirers/Candidates in person, by phone, or by email two weeks before each CPM meeting or more often as mutually desired.
- Be present at Inquirers'/Candidates' annual consultation with CPM. Inform CPM at least three months in advance of steps to be taken at that meeting. Review the situation of Inquirers/Candidates so that you can alert CPM to strengths and weaknesses in their development, and alert them to possible concerns that the commission may have. You are encouraged to include the Session liaison in any conversations with the Inquirers/Candidates to prepare for annual consultations.
- Be the advocate for Inquirers/Candidates at points of tension with the commission. Interpret when necessary.
- Remind the Inquirers/Candidates periodically of requirements for ordination, including required course work, field education, CPE, Bible content and other standard ordination examinations, as well as papers and forms that are due.
- Work with the Inquirers/Candidates in preparing their Statement of Call, Statement of Faith, the exegesis and the sermon.
- Discuss with Inquirers/Candidates their developing faith, including worship, prayer, and other sources of spiritual growth.
- Contact Inquirers/Candidates after meetings of the Commission to debrief them on discussions or actions relating to them. At times there may be personal matters which the liaison may choose not to share with the commission, but the liaison must be free to share matters which are relevant to the Inquirers'/Candidates' future ministry.
- If requested, liaisons may also assist Candidates in preparing a dossier or PIF and advising on other aspects of the process of searching for a call.

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Role of the Session Liaison

An elder is appointed to act as the Session's liaison with each Inquirer/Candidate and with presbytery's Commission on Preparation for Ministry, to accompany the Inquirer/Candidate and CPM as they explore and evaluate his or her progress in the preparation for ministry.

Some of the ways by which the liaison might participate in the process:

- Learn the background of the Inquirer, if you do not already know it: parents, siblings, school, college, vocational interests and abilities, birthday, spouse, children, seminary, progress toward ordination, financial needs.
- Visit, write, or phone to introduce yourself. Become acquainted in a way that seems natural to you and to the Inquirer.
- Take an interest in his/her academic program, field education, annual consultation, and other activities related to preparation for ministry.
- Discuss with the Session the progress the Inquirer/Candidate is making. Share areas of particular need for the Inquirer/Candidate.
- Become aware of times when the Inquirer/Candidate will be home and try to make contact, ideally in person.
- Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the progress of the Inquirer/Candidate.
- Initiate conversation with the Session on the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support.
- If possible, attend the CPM meetings as the person becomes an Inquirer and Candidate and attend the Presbytery meeting at which he/she is examined for Candidacy.
- If possible, attend the service(s) of ordination and installation.
- Remember your Inquirer/Candidate in prayer.
- Write your Inquirer/Candidate on special occasions. Keep in touch by email and social media.
- Become acquainted with the Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and CPM guidelines so that you are aware of the requirements and procedures and can provide timely support.
- Be a friend and lend to your Inquirer/Candidate a sense of your personal and spiritual interest in and support of him/her in preparation for ministry.
- Should you complete your term on Session, request the Moderator to appoint a new liaison promptly.
- Hope that in performing this role, you will also grow in grace and faith.